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New Britain

Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Human Services Subcommittee. My name is Waleska Martinez, I live in New Britain, and I've worked as an Certified Nurses Assistant (CNA) at Amber Woods in Farmington for 8 years. I come before you today to ask that you allocate funding to nursing homes to address short staffing.

CNAs are responsible for feeding residents, helping them with hygiene, and ensuring they are safe. This in itself is time consuming, difficult work, but oftentimes CNAs end up helping with tasks that aren't in our job description because they need to get done. We return carts to the kitchens and do the dishes because we don't have enough dietary aides. This takes up 45 minutes of our time every meal.

Despite the challenges of this work, I love what I do. My residents are my main focus and I've grown to love them like family. They are very considerate and know we are short staffed. They see us trying our best and many residents are patient with us, but that is still not fair to them. On days we are short staffed we are hustling from 7am to well after our shift ends at 3pm. Last week we had three CNAs to 30 residents, and I ended up staying late to ensure they all got to take a shower.

On days like that we don't take breaks. It's hard as a professional caregiver to work in this environment. We are angry, frustrated, depressed, and leave everyday drained. When I get home I shut down. I never have the energy to spend time with my own family. How is that fair to me or my coworkers? Our love for our residents and our compassion is exploited and used against us. Our residents deserve better and so do we.

When we are staffed properly we are able to do our job. Residents are well groomed, showered, and we can actually slow down to talk to them and make them happy. When we are short we have to rush from one resident to the next and have no time to talk with them. It fills my heart to be able to socialize with patients because I know many of them aren't visited by friends and family. We are their friends and family.

Fully funding nursing homes is one of the most immediate ways to address short staffing. Additional funding can go towards hiring more staff and paying existing staff a livable wage. Please fund bills like SB 989, which will raise staffing standards in nursing homes. By raising the staffing standard and creating enforcement mechanisms, the state can send a message that you care for residents and the people who care for them. Thank you.